

## **Market based questions (as at April 2011)**

### **How much fish do we eat in the UK?**

We eat £5.65 billion worth of seafood in the UK weighing in at 380,000 tonnes.

### **What is the most popular fish in the UK?**

The top ten is as follows:

- Salmon
- Tuna
- Cod
- Haddock
- Warmwater prawns
- Coldwater prawns
- Mackerel
- Pollack
- Scampi
- Sardines

### **What does pelagic mean?**

Pelagic fish are those that live close to the top of the water column. Herring and sardines are common pelagic fish.

### **What does demersal mean?**

Demersal fish are those that live on or near to the sea bed. Cod and haddock are demersal fish.

### **What seafood is exported from the UK?**

In the UK, we export most of the seafood we catch in our waters. This is because foreign seafood markets greatly value UK species, such as langoustine, crab and mackerel, while domestic consumers focus their purchases on a smaller range of species, such as cod, salmon and haddock.

In 2010, just over 512,400 tonnes of seafood worth £1.33 billion was exported from the UK.

The main export markets for the UK seafood are France, Spain, Italy, the Irish Republic and the USA which between them accounted for around 50% (by value) of the seafood exported from the UK.

- Mixed seafood for processing was the main export to the Irish Republic, Germany and the Netherlands.
- High value shellfish like langoustine, crab and scallops and exported to the French, Spanish and Italian markets.
- Pelagic fish were destined mainly for the Russian, Nigerian and Ukrainian markets.

### **What seafood is imported into the UK?**

In 2010, a total of 687,054 tonnes of seafood worth £2.23 billion was imported into the UK.

The countries the UK receives imports from reflects our traditional tastes in seafood:

- Cod, haddock and other white fish come from Iceland and the Faroe Islands.
- Salmon from Norway.
- Salmon and pollack from the USA.
- Cold water prawns from Denmark and Canada.
- Tuna from Mauritius and the Seychelles.

- Warmwater prawns from Thailand, India and Bangladesh.

Recently, imports of aquaculture species like warmwater prawns from India and basa from Vietnam have increased.

**How many people are employed in the UK seafood processing industry?**

Approximately 14,331 people are employed in the UK seafood processing industry.

**How many people are employed in the UK fish and chip industry?**

Approximately 65,000 people keep the fish and chip shops of the UK going.

**How many seafood retail outlets are there in the UK (independent mongers and multiple retailers)?**

Most big supermarkets now have a wet fish counter and there are around 1,000 independent fishmongers in the UK.

**'2 a week' questions**

**How many people eat the recommended '2 a week' in the UK?**

28% at present.

**Does smoked fish count as part of your '2 a week'?**

Yes, but the salt content is quite high.

**What species/formats count towards your '2 a week'?**

Any seafood counts towards your '2 a week'.

**Do fish and chips count as one of your '2 a week'?**

Yes.

**Sustainability questions**

**Is it okay to eat cod and haddock?**

Cod stocks in UK waters are depleted and are under strict management measures to ensure that the stock recovers. However, more than 95% of the cod we eat in this country comes from sustainable stocks in Iceland and the Barents Sea so you can eat cod with a clear conscience.

Haddock stocks in UK waters are strong and there is no problem eating haddock.

**Where does the cod we eat come from?**

See above.

**I love cod, but I am concerned about this species being over-fished. Is there an alternative?**

If you like the taste and texture of cod, you'll love pollack, ling, gurnard and hake. These fish all have a similar white, flaky texture and subtle flavour to cod, and work well in any recipe that calls for cod.

**With some fish stocks dangerously low would it be better for us to stop eating fish?**

No, not at all. While it is true that some species are at low levels – North Sea cod in particular – many other types of fish are abundant in British waters. In Cornwall, for example, 40 different species of fish are landed every day, of which only 12 are subject to quotas and

for those that are restricted by quotas many have seen quota increases in recent years reflecting the greater abundance of some stocks.

### **What is discarding?**

Discards are those parts of the catch that are returned to the sea. It is important to emphasise that discarding is not a universal problem affecting all fisheries. The level of discarding varies widely between fisheries, and within fisheries.

There are many different reasons for discarding but the two major reasons are market conditions and management regulations. Both these sets of conditions can change by season or by fishing area, even within one fishery.

The fishing industry is working hard to reduce discards. For more information, see our [guide to discards](#).

### **What is the industry doing to protect fish supplies?**

Fisheries are subject to government controls to conserve stocks and prevent overfishing. Controls on these fisheries are based on regular monitoring and assessment of the status of individual stocks, conducted by independent and government-based scientific organisations.

Many fisheries in the UK are based on a mixture of species. Much work has gone into creating new fishing gear that will reduce 'discards' (non-target or over-quota species of fish that are thrown back into the sea) and also reduce the impact of fishing gear on the environment. This industry wants the practice of discarding stopped, and has a vested interest in seeing all marine stocks managed sustainably. The industry-led Discard Action Group has been established specifically to reduce discards.

Fishermen around the UK are involved in a variety of voluntary codes of conducts to provide responsible management of ocean resources. These include real-time closures, when fishermen find concentrations of juvenile fish, and other voluntary closed areas on a more seasonal basis, such as the Trevoze Box Closure – an area of 3,600 square miles off Padstow which closes each season to protect the spawning of fish such as Dover sole and whiting. This agreement was secured by Cornish fishermen working closely with their European counterparts.

Another voluntary scheme, coordinated by Seafish, is the Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS). RFS is an independent, audited assessment of the application of good practice – including environmental considerations – by a vessel skipper and crew in their fishing operations.

### **Where does the fish we eat in the UK come from?**

In the UK, supermarkets have strict sourcing policies in place to ensure their supply chain is sustainable and ethical. We have more than 100 species of seafood available from the UK coastline, however, much of what we eat is imported from further afield. In general:

- Cod, haddock and other whitefish comes from sustainable stocks in Iceland and the Faroe Islands.
- Salmon and pollack come from Scotland, Norway and the USA.
- Coldwater prawns are from Denmark and Canada.
- Fresh tuna from Mauritius and the Seychelles.
- Warmwater prawns from Thailand and India.

## **Aquaculture questions**

For a full Q&A about the aquaculture industry in the UK, please see our [aquaculture Q&A document](#).

## **Catching questions**

### **How much fish is caught in UK waters/landed by UK boats?**

UK vessels landed 581,000 tonnes of sea fish (including shellfish) in 2009, with a value of £674 million. (source: MMO)

### **What are the leading UK fishing ports?**

Peterhead remains the port with the largest quantity (112,000 tonnes) and value (£101 million) of fish landed. Lerwick had the second highest landings, down 23 per cent to 51,000 tonnes from 66,000 tonnes in 2008. Fraserburgh had the third highest landings with 36,000 tonnes, an increase of 30 per cent from 28,000 tonnes in 2008. Plymouth had the highest quantity of landings in England with 14,000 tonnes. (source: MMO 2009)

### **How many vessels are in the UK fleet?**

In 2009, the UK fishing industry had 6,500 fishing vessels compared with 7,818 in 2000, a reduction of 17 per cent. The fleet in 2009 comprised 5,021 10 metre and under vessels and 1,479 over 10 metre vessels. (source: MMO)

### **How many people are employed in the catching sector?**

There were 12,212 fishermen in 2009, down 22 per cent since 2000. Of these, 5,358 were based in England (down 22 per cent since 2000), 851 in Wales (down 26 per cent), 5,349 in Scotland (down 23 per cent) and 654 in Northern Ireland (down 5 per cent). Part-time fishermen accounted for 17 per cent of the total, a proportion that has changed little over the last ten years. (source: MMO)

## **Health questions**

### **Which fish is lowest in fat?**

All fish and shellfish are low in fat making them a great option for anyone trying to control their weight.

### **Is it true that prawns are bad for your cholesterol levels?**

For the vast majority of people trying to control cholesterol levels, moderate consumption of any shellfish as part of a balanced diet should not be a problem.

In the past it was believed that people should avoid certain foods containing dietary cholesterol. It is now known that saturated fat is more influential in raising blood cholesterol than dietary cholesterol itself.

Dietary cholesterol is present in crustaceans (prawns, crabs and lobsters), as well as in squid, octopus and cuttlefish. But despite containing some cholesterol, they contain very little fat and for most people they do not cause a rise in the level of cholesterol in the blood. Shellfish which are molluscs (such as cockles, mussels, oysters, scallops and clams) are very low in cholesterol, about half as much as chicken, and contain much less cholesterol than red meats – so these do not need to be avoided by anyone.

Because shellfish are very low in saturated fat, low in calories and contain Omega-3 fats, they are a heart-healthy option.

### **What fish can I eat whilst pregnant?**

Eating seafood whilst you are pregnant is good for your health and the development of your baby. You can eat most types of fish and shellfish when you're pregnant or breastfeeding – there are just a few types you need to limit or avoid.

For more information, see our webpage about [eating seafood whilst pregnant](#).

### **What is Omega-3?**

Omega-3 is an essential fatty acid found in high levels in oil-rich fish. Tests have shown that Omega-3 can protect against heart disease by lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels, preventing blood clots and keeping arteries healthy. Omega-3 is also believed to be a factor in helping to prevent strokes and certain types of cancer. Sufferers of asthma, arthritis, eczema and psychological imbalances are also thought to benefit from Omega-3 in their diets.

### **Which fish are good sources of Omega-3?**

Oil-rich fish such as herring, mackerel, sardines and salmon are the best sources of Omega-3 along with shellfish such as crab, oysters and mussels. We've produced a [handy document](#) telling you which fish have the most Omega-3.

### **Why can't I just take a fish oil pill?**

Fish offers many other health benefits apart from just Omega-3 so you'd be missing out on these by just taking a pill. And seafood is very tasty so why deny yourself a treat?

### **Are mercury levels in fish something I should worry about?**

For most people this is not something you need to worry about. Fish that are particularly high in mercury levels include shark and swordfish, both of which we would not recommend you eat due to sustainability concerns.

Pregnant women and children may have to watch their intake of these species and some tuna species. For more information see the [Food Standards Agency](#) website.

### **What are the health benefits of eating seafood?**

We all know seafood is good for us. But did you know it can do everything from improving your joints to helping to ward off depression? Read our [nutrition information](#) to find out more about what seafood can do for your brain, heart, skin, eyes . . . in fact, pretty much everything – including your love life!

### **How much seafood should I be eating?**

The government recommends that you should eat two portions of seafood a week, one of which should be oil-rich fish such as mackerel, herring, anchovies or salmon for example.

### **Can you eat too much fish?**

No. The Food Standards Agency recommends you should eat at least two portions of seafood per week, one of which should be oil-rich such as mackerel or herring. However, you should monitor your intake of fish which contain higher levels of mercury such as shark, swordfish, marlin and tuna.

## How many calories are in a fish supper?

Comparison of fish and chips against other takeaway food products:

	Fat per 100g	Calories per 100g
Fish, chips and mushy peas	5.3g	153 kcal
Pizza	11.0g	871 kcal
Burger and medium fries	12.1g	888 kcal
Doner kebab	16.2g	942 kcal

Fried cod, chips and mushy peas (Average Medium Portion Serving 450g)

## Buying seafood questions

### What should I look for when buying fish?

What to look out for:

- Whole fresh fish will have eyes that are bright and not sunken. The skin should have a shiny, moist, firm appearance. You should also notice a pleasant sea fresh aroma if the fish is really fresh.
- When buying fillets look out for neat, trim fillets and a white translucent appearance.
- Smoked fish should look glossy with a fresh smoky aroma.
- When selecting shellfish choose shells which are tightly closed and without any gaps or cracks.
- Lobsters and crabs should be heavy for their size.
- When buying frozen seafood, check that the fish is frozen solid with no signs of partial thawing. Make sure that packaging is undamaged and there is no sign of freezer burn.

### What's better, fresh or frozen?

Well, it depends – it all comes down to what fish you're looking for, what form you want it in, and even what season it is. Technological advances in freezing mean that fish can maintain its quality very well. Freezer trawlers allow fish to be processed and frozen within a very short time of being caught, optimizing quality. Legally, if a fish has been previously frozen it should not be labelled fresh but may be termed chilled. It's down to personal choice but many people choose to buy fresh fish from fishmongers counter when it is in season and frozen from the freezer cabinet when it is not.

### Can I freeze fish?

Any fish you are not planning on eating within a few days must be frozen. Oil-rich fish such as mackerel do not freeze well but there is no problem freezing fish such as cod, haddock, salmon, or prawns.

All types of fish must be wrapped or packaged in airtight and moisture-vapour proof packaging such as aluminium foil, plastic containers, polythene bags or freezer-lock bags. Remove all air from the packaging as possible before sealing and over wrap with cling film if preferred.

You should eat the fish within three months of it being frozen.

### What can I expect a fishmonger to do to prepare fish for me?

Most fishmongers are very helpful and will fillet fish, remove bones, portion up a fish as well as offering advice on how to cook fish and what sauces and side dishes to use.

### **When is it safe for babies to begin eating fish?**

Babies can safely start eating whitefish at six months and oil-rich fish at eight months. Avoid feeding small children smoked fish until they are around 18 months old. When preparing fish for infants, always be very careful to ensure that all bones have been removed.

### **What do I buy for best value for money?**

Whitefish such as pollack and coley are better value for money than cod or haddock and are very similar in taste and texture. You could also try buying frozen fillets which offer good value for money.

### **I only buy cod – what else can I eat?**

If you prefer mild tasting fish then you could also try haddock, plaice, sole, pollack, coley, dab or gurnard. There are more than 100 different species of seafood caught off the UK coast so why not try something new?

### **Can you tell me when different seafood species are in season?**

[The Seafood Guide](#) is a colourful 50-page guide and includes detailed species information on more than 100 seafood species and their availability.

The Guide also includes basic information on preparing seafood including filleting and portioning whole fish. Tips on storing seafood and what to look out for when buying seafood are also included.

## **Cooking seafood questions**

### **How do I cook fish?**

Fish is an incredibly versatile ingredient that can be cooked in many different ways. Fish can be grilled, pan-fried, steamed or microwaved for a quick and easy lunch or dinner, or poached, roasted or smoked with other ingredients for a more elaborate meal. In the summer, barbecuing whole fish or fillets makes an exciting change from burgers.

For more information, check out our [Healthy Guide to Buying Preparing Cooking and Sourcing Seafood](#).

### **Where can I get recipe ideas from?**

Check out the Seafish website where there are lots of [great seafood recipes](#) that you can download for free.

### **Can I cook fish from frozen?**

For more information, check out our [Healthy Guide to Buying Preparing Cooking and Sourcing Seafood](#).

### **Can I get ill from eating fish/shellfish?**

Seafood is a safe, healthy food which forms an important part of the national diet.

Like with any other food, there are strict regulations in place to enforce seafood hygiene and safety, to guard against bacteria or toxins which can make you ill.

Several EU regulations cover hygiene and food safety and both central and local government bodies share the responsibility for enforcing regulations on food standards.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA), an independent food safety watchdog, is responsible for enforcing and monitoring food safety regulations to ensure that the products that reach the consumers are safe to eat. In particular, the FSA monitors shellfisheries in a series of

geographical boxes. If there is a concern about potential toxins within one of those boxes the agency closes that whole area to fishing for shellfish.

For more information on food safety regulation visit the Food Standards Agency website at [www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)

When cooking and storing seafood, follow basic hygiene rules such as washing your hands before and after handling raw ingredients and adhering to use-by date guidance.

More information on avoiding food poisoning is available at: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/homehygiene/Pages/Foodpoisoningtips.aspx>